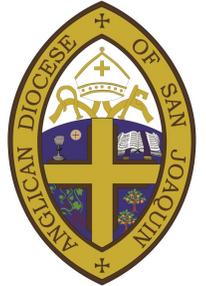


THE SAN JOAQUIN ANGLICAN



The Bishop's Corner

The Right Reverend Eric Vawter Menees

I hope you had a blessed Christmas season. Christmas is, of course, the main Feast Day in our Church calendar after Easter, but interestingly, Epiphany is older. The first we hear of Christians celebrating Christmas or Epiphany is in the 4th century, where the Feast of the Epiphany is said to include both the birth of Jesus and His baptism. It was only later that the Early Church started celebrating Christmas a few days earlier on December 25th. While we in the West remember the visit of the Magi on the Epiphany, our brothers and sisters in the Eastern Church still use the Epiphany to commemorate Christ's baptism.

Epiphany isn't just about individual events like the visit of the Magi; Epiphany is about the manifestation or appearance of Christ to the world. In other words, Epiphany is the time when Christ first became known to the Gentiles. Similarly, when Eastern Christians remember the Baptism of Jesus they're not so much focusing on that one singular event; Epiphany is about seeing the event as the point when Jesus' ministry began and when His identity as The Christ was made known to the world.

This Feast logically follows from the Feast of the Incarnation. Christmas is about God becoming man and dwelling with us on Earth, a singular and

BISHOP'S SCHEDULE AND DIOCESAN CALENDAR



January 6 - Epiphany

January 12 - 10 am - Rural Deans

January 13 - 10:30 am - Diocesan Clergy Meeting on Zoom

January 14 - 2 pm - Ordination of Dcn. Michael Bush

January 16 - 10 am - Standing Committee

February 3 - 10:30 am - Diocesan Clergy Meeting on Zoom

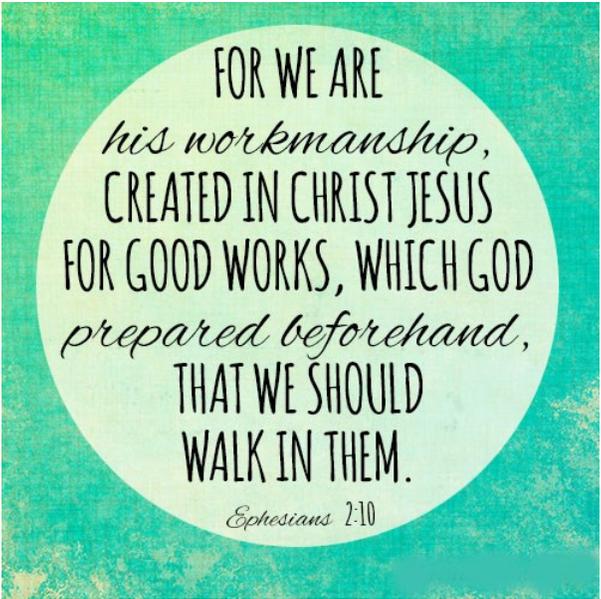


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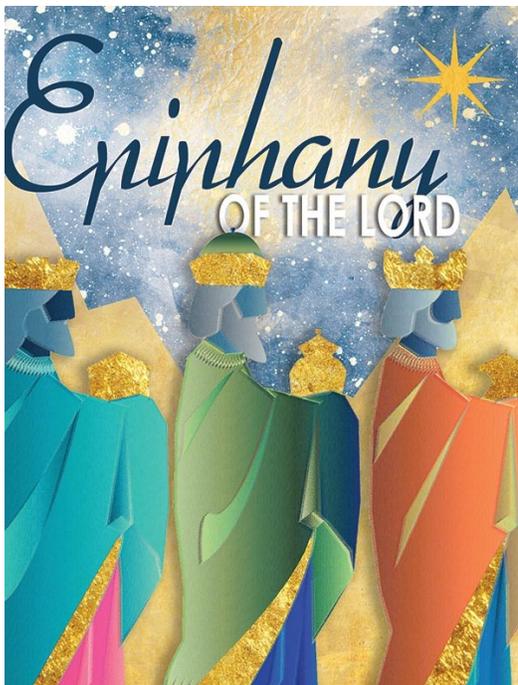
miraculous event. The Epiphany is about making the Incarnation known to the world. We have a short time to celebrate the Incarnation, to truly rejoice in what God's done, and then the season after Epiphany comes where we take that joy and share it with others.

What really connects the Incarnation and the Epiphany for each of us is our adoption as children of God. Far too many people use "children of God" in a general sense speaking about all people. Yes, we are all created in the image of God, but not everyone is a child of God. People become children of God only after being baptized into Christ's death and Resurrection. That's why the Incarnation happened. As Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) said, the Word of God became man so that man could become like God.



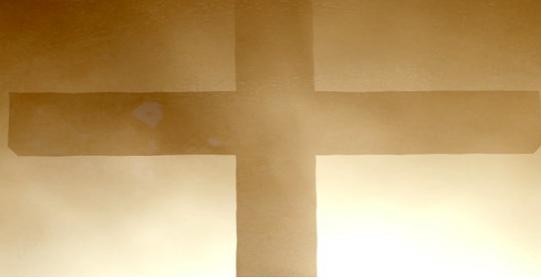
In the same way that God became man out of His love for us, our becoming children of God isn't about getting some badge or token we can just be content with. In reality it is about God enabling us to reciprocate that love and share it with others. We have received God – now we need to make His presence known to the world around us.

Of course we're looking at a season after Epiphany that's unprecedented in our lives. Many of us are not able to go out into the world as we normally would because of restrictions or our own vulnerability. But this doesn't mean we can't share the joy of God's presence with those around us. We need to realize that this time, more than any other, is ripe to share the Good News of Christ. And we can be creative in finding ways to share our faith through relationships with friends and family, sharing with people on social media – or even by tipping an essential worker and letting them know they are loved by God.



I strongly encourage all of you this Epiphany to actively look for ways you can make Christ known to the world around you. That means more than just being friendly to people or saying nice things – show how Christ's presence impacts your life. Your action-based faith could be by going out of your way to help someone, showing your love for your neighbor, sitting down with people and having a conversation about your faith. We can let the love of Christ overflow within our hearts and work itself out in everything we say or do.

(Continued on page 3)



Transitions

- ◆ December 21st **Fr. Anthony Velez** was ordained to the priesthood. Fr. Anthony is serving at St. James, Fresno, and assisting at Holy Cross, Sanger.
- ◆ January 6th **Deacon Michael Bush** will be ordained to the priesthood. Soon-to-be Fr. Bush will be serving as Rector at Christ Church, Oakhurst.
- ◆ On December 28th **Deacon Tom Hunt** died peacefully surrounded by family, following a fall a month earlier. Please keep Deacon Tom's daughters, Cindy and Michelle, and their families in your prayers.



Living Between Advent and Epiphany

By Susan A. Schnetz

The essence of the longing for Christ to come is reflected in the first stanza of the Christmas carol dating back to the 12th century: "O come, O come Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear." (Notable: The lyrics were originally written in Latin, but the author and composer of this beautiful carol are unknown.)

As this Christmas song declares, Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year and a time of expectant waiting and preparation for celebrating the Nativity of Christ and the return of Christ at the Second Coming.

In our church celebrations, Advent reminds us that prior to the Birth of Jesus, people were disillusioned, wandering, and did not know the Light that was to come. As Matthew 4:16 records: "the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned." Now we await His return. In His first coming, Jesus suffered and died as our Savior; in His second coming, Jesus will return as Judge and reigning King.

Awaiting the Messiah

The prophets anticipated Jesus' first coming for hundreds of years. They looked forward to a Messiah who would save God's people from oppression and exile. The apostle Peter wrote of this in his first epistle: "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and



inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11 NASB).

The prophet Isaiah looked ahead to Jesus’ birth (7:14) and declared that the Son of God would be called Emmanuel, meaning “God is with us.” Today we are able to joyfully acknowledge when the second Person of the Trinity arrived: “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). As Christians we celebrate the arrival of

Emmanuel as a Baby, born of the Virgin Mary. As we say the Nicene Creed together in our Eucharist services, we acknowledge that Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God, is fully God and fully man. Jesus lived a life of righteousness and ultimately gave Himself up as a Sacrifice for our sins so that we are no longer estranged from God and our friendship with God is restored.

Our Reigning King Jesus

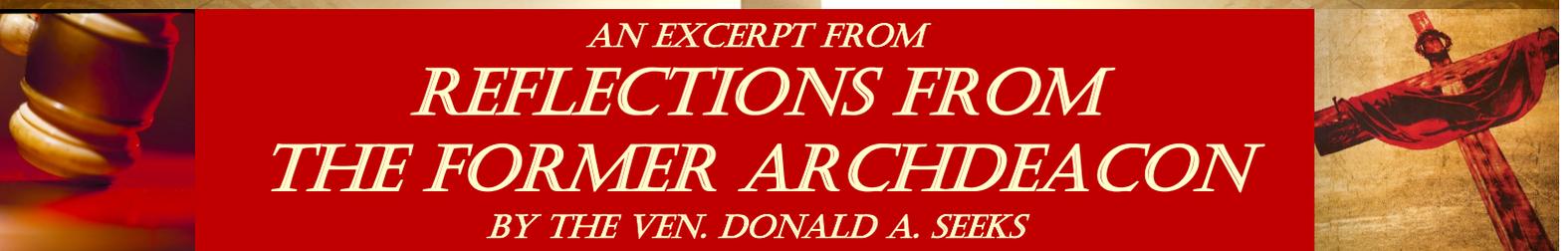
As we continue to celebrate Advent, we know that Jesus’ first coming is not the end of God’s plan for restoration. After His Resurrection instead of establishing an earthly kingdom, Jesus ascended into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of God (Ephesians 1:20). We now await His Second Coming and return as Judge and reigning King.

The prophets anticipated His eternal reign (see Daniel 7:14), but then the timeline was not evident between His two comings. Today, we have the privilege these many centuries later to anticipate Jesus’ Return. He has given us salvation, and in Him we have “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3 NASB).

We wait for the day when we will be fully transformed into His image. The last stanza of the carol “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” celebrates our welcoming the Return of Christ: “*Oh, come, desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind; oh, bid our sad divisions cease, and be yourself our King of Peace.*”

Even though we do not know when Christ is coming back, we have confidence that He will return (2 Peter 3:8-9). As we celebrate Advent and Epiphany this year and the wonderful mystery of the Incarnation, we can now live in light of that Day when Jesus will return. Together we can join in the final words that close the Bible (Rev. 22:20), praying, “Come, Lord Jesus.”





AN EXCERPT FROM
REFLECTIONS FROM
THE FORMER ARCHDEACON
BY THE VEN. DONALD A. SEEKS

Birthrights: Who We Are in Christ

Many people today are searching for a real sense of identity. Many of those same people are now aware that God offers a birthright of identity to everyone. The great lesson we find in Holy Scripture concerning birthright is the story of Jacob and Esau as found in the 25th Chapter of Genesis.

Esau was a skillful hunter, a good athlete, a very physical person who became the favorite son of His father Isaac. Isaac loved fresh game from the field. His brother lived a quieter, more reflective life as a shepherd, and was a favorite of their mother. One day Esau came in from the fields having caught nothing and was hungry and he said, to the point of dying by starvation. Jacob seized the moment and the advantage to obtain his older brother's birthright as Esau exclaimed, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?"

Now the birthright over which the two brothers contended was a physical one. Esau had sold his birthright for inheriting a material possession to which the older brother was entitled. When he cashed his inheritance for a full stomach he lost his true identity in life, for that's what a birthright really is.

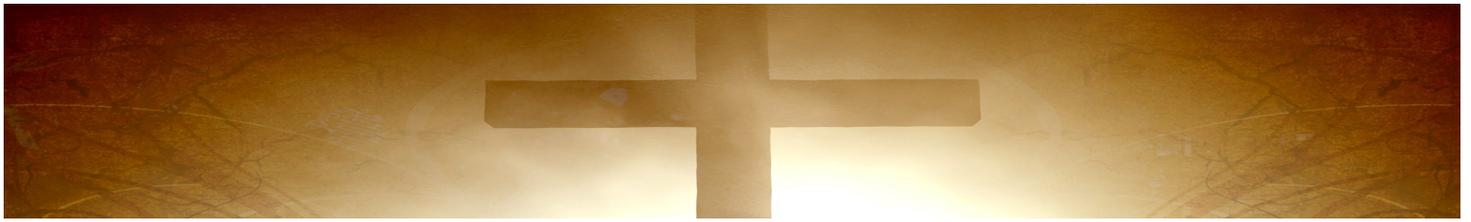
The New Testament birthright is not physical but spiritual. Our true identity has to do with being adopted as spiritual sons of God and joint heirs with Christ. (By the way, spiritual "sonship" has nothing to do with gender since we are equal, male and female, in the sight of our Father. It has to do with full inheritance.) Because of what God our Father has done for us in His Son, Christ Jesus, we are in a very real sense "born again" into the deepest, most personal, most intimate kind of relationship with God.

Our birthright includes a glorious plan for each one of us as individuals, a plan which will bring us to the highest sense of achievement and fulfillment in terms of personality. As we are being transformed by the power of Christ's love and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will realize the final portion of our birthright. It is the key to who we really are as God has designed us, and who it is we will be for eternity. "For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his (birthright)?"



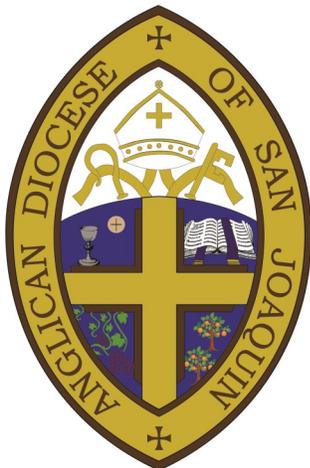
IF YOU GAIN
the whole world
BUT LOSE YOUR
own soul?

MARK 8:36, NLT



Bishop's Note series--

The ***Bishop's Note*** is a pastoral message published weekly by Bishop Eric Menees. To subscribe, send an email message with your email to receptionist@dioceseofsanjoaquin.net.



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Submissions will be accepted for consideration anytime. Contributions **must be received by the 20th** of the month for possible inclusion in the newsletter in the following month.

Please send these to melody@ctkridgecrest.org

Thank you!